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THE DAILY NORTHWESTERN
EVANSTON, IL
15 January 1980

CIA tries tapping campus prospects

By Mark Rosenfelder
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The CIA was on campus Monday.

Not to tap the Centrex phones, or close in on Russian saboteurs in the chemistry department.

A Central Intelligence Agency representative, Charles Minich, was at Northwestern for interviews, at the Placement Office in Scott, like any other prospective employer.

"Our interest is collecting and evaluating information and delivering that information to the president," Minich said.

"Ninety percent of the information we get comes from open sources like newspapers, magazines and trade journals," Minich said. Also, "we get involved in the clandestine collection of information."

Undercover work—spying—requires a year of training, and applicants are expected to have a master's or doctorate, some work experience, and know one foreign language.

Minich said he was looking to fill less suspenseful positions with engineers, economists, cartographers and political scientists. Engineers are needed to analyze foreign technology, for example, while economists research other nations' economies.

Some students said they were just curious, and others said they were interested in a job.

"Very few (companies) are looking for liberal arts majors, especially economics," said CAS senior Rob Portman. "This job was partly looking for economics majors. It was just like any other interview."

Not entirely. "He (Minich) was very honest. He said, 'Much of the stuff we're doing is very classified, and I can't tell you much,'" Portman said.

"They didn't tell me a whole heck of a lot, because I don't have the security clearance," said Tech senior Cathy Mei. "It was quite interesting."

"He (Minich) didn't wear a trench coat or anything," Mei said. "He was really nice."

"We look for a pretty solid individual," Minich said. "Top quarter of the class. People who know what they want and know how to get it."

The CIA's reputation doesn't affect hiring, he said. "Some people are more apprehensive. On the other hand, it stirs up interest in the adventuresome sort."

"It's another alternative," said CAS senior Mike Gentile.



Daily Illustration by Robert Leighton